Nazareth—or Jesus, Rejected by His Friends

A sermon
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"And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust Him out of the city. And they led Him unto the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throwHim down over the cliff. Thenpassing through the midst of them He went His way."- Luke 4:28-30.

JESUS had spent several years in retirement in the house of His reputed father at Nazareth. He must have been well known—the excellency of His Character and conduct must have attracted notice. In due time He left Nazareth, was baptized by John in Jordan, and began at once His work of preaching and working wonders. The inhabitants of Nazareth, no doubt, often said to one another, "He will be sure to come home and see His parents. When He comes we will all go to hear what the carpenter's son has to say."

There is always an interest in hearing one of the lads of the village when he becomes a preacher, and this interest was heightened by the hope of seeing wonders such as Jesus had worked at Capernaum. Curiosity was excited—everybody hoped and trusted that He would make Nazareth famous among the cities of the tribes. Perhaps He would settle down there and attract a crowd of customers to their shops by becoming the great Physician of Nazareth, the great Wonderworker of the district.

By-and-by, when it so pleased Him, the famous Prophet came to His own city, and, when the Sunday drew near, the interest grew very intense as men asked the question, "What do you think, will He be at the synagogue tomorrow? If He shall be there, He must, by some means, be induced to speak." The ruler of the synagogue, sharing in the common opinion, at the proper point of the service, when he saw Jesus present, took up the roll of the Prophet and passed it to Him, that He might read a passage, and then speak according to His own mind upon it.

All eyes were opened. No sleepy people were in the synagogue that morning when He took the roll, unfolded it like one who was well accustomed to the Book, opened it at a passage most pertinent and applicable to Himself, read it, standing, thus paying respect to the Word by His posture. And then, when He had folded up the Book, He took His seat—not because He had nothing to say—but because it was the good practice in those days for the preacher to sit down and the hearers to stand. A method much to be preferred to the present one in some respects, at any rate, when the preacher is lame, or the hearers drowsy.

The passage which Jesus read to them, I have said, was very suitable and applicable to Himself. But the most remarkable point, perhaps, was not so much what He read as what He did not read, for He paused, almost, in the middle of a sentence: "To proclaim," said He, "the year of the Lord," and there He stopped. The passage is not complete unless you read the next words, "and the day of vengeance of our God." Our Lord wisely ceased reading at those words, probably wishing that the first sermon He should deliver should be altogether gentle, and have in it not so much as a word of threatening.

His heart's desire and prayer for them was that they might be saved, and that instead of a day of vengeance it might be to them the acceptable year of the Lord. So he folded the Book, sat down, and then began His exposition by opening up His own commission, He explained who the blind were, who the captives were, who the sick and wounded and bruised were, and after what sort the Grace of God had provided liberty and healing and salvation.

They were all wonder struck! They had never heard anyone speak so fluently and with so much force—so simply, and yet so nobly. All eyes were fastened and everybody was astonished at the Speaker's style and matter. Soon a buzz went round the synagogue, for each man said to his fellow, "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? From where, then, has this Man all these things?"

They were astonished and envious, too. Then the Speaker, feeling that it was not the object of His ministry to astonish people but to impress their hearts, changed His subject, and charged with tremendous vigor upon their consciences. For if men will only give the minister their wonder, they have given him nothing! We desire you to be convicted, and

converted, and short of this, we fail. Jesus turned from a subject glowing with interest, fruitful with every blessing— seeing that to them it was no more than pearls to swine—and He spoke to them personally, pointedly, somewhat cuttingly, as they thought. "You will surely say unto Me this proverb, Physician, heal Yourself: whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country."

And then He plainly told them that He did not recognize their claims, that albeit He might have been bred in that district, and have lived with them, yet He did not recognize from that reason any obligation to display His power to suit their pleasure. And He gave an instance in point—He showed that Elijah, when God, "the Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widow"—would bless a widow was not sent to bless a widow of Israel, but a Gentile woman, a Syro-phenician, one of the accursed Canaanites!

To none of the widows of Israel "was Elijah sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow." Then, again, He mentioned that Elisha, the servant of Elijah, when he had healing to give to lepers, did not heal an Israelite leper—he healed not even those lepers who came with the good news that the Syrian host had fled. But he healed a stranger from a far country, even Naaman.

Thus the Savior set forth the doctrine of Sovereign Grace! Thus He declared Himself to be free to do as He would with His own. And this, with other circumstances connected with the sermon, so excited the anger of the entire congregation that those eyes which had looked upon Him with wonder, at first, now began to glare like the eyes of beasts! And those tongues which were ready to have given Him applause began to howl forth indignation!

They rose up at once to slay the Preacher! The curiosity of yesterday was turned into the indignation of today, and whereas, a few hours ago they would have welcomed the Prophet to His own country, they would now think, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" is too good for Him. They drag Him out of the synagogue—breaking up their own worship, forgetful of the holiness of the day to which they paid such wonderful respect—and they compelled Him forth to cast Him, as malefactors sometimes were from lofty rocks, from the brow of the hill on which their city was built.

He evaded them and escaped, but what a singular termination to such a beginning! Why, you and I would have said, What a fruitful field have we here! The best of Preachers! And one of the most desirable of audiences—a people all attentive, every ear open, almost every mouth open, so wonder-struck are they with Him—with His mode of address and with what He has to say! There will be innumerable conversion here! Nazareth will become the stronghold of Christianity! It will be the very metropolis of the new faith!

But no such thing—such is the perversity of human nature—that where we expect much, we get but little. And the field which should have brought forth wheat a hundred-fold, yields nothing but thorns and thistles. My design is, as God may help me, to make an application of this narrative to the hearts and consciences of some now present—some who are doing with the Savior somewhat in the same manner as these men of Nazareth did with Him in the days of His flesh. We shall consider, first of all, who were these rejecters of Christ. Secondly, why this rejection. And thirdly, what came of it.

I. First, then, WHO WERE THESE REJECTORS OF CHRIST? I ask the question because I am persuaded that they have their types and representatives here at the present moment. They were, dear Friends, first of all, those who were nearest related to the Savior. They were the people of His own town. Ordinarily, you would expect fellow townsmen to show a man the most kindness. He was come unto His own, and though His own received Him not, this was a subject of wonder that they should not do so!

Now, there are some in this house this morning who are not Christians. They are not with Christ and consequently they are against Him. But still they are the nearest related to Christ of any unconverted people in the world because from their childhood they have attended religious worship. They have joined in the songs, and prayers, and services of the Lord's House.

Moreover, they are fully persuaded of the authenticity and Divinity of the Word of God, and they have no doubt but what the Savior was sent from God and that He can save, and

is the appointed Savior. They are not troubled with doubts. Skeptical thoughts do not perplex them. They are, in fact, Agrippas, almost persuaded to be Christians. They are not Christians, but they are the nearest related to Christians of any people living upon the face of the earth.

You would naturally expect that they would be the best people to preach to, but they have not proved to be so. They have not proved to be so in my case, for some such attending here are less likely to be brought to a decision than those who are afar off. You know to whom I refer, for some of you, as you look me in the face, might well think, "Master, in saying so, you rebuke us, also."

These people of Nazareth, again, were those who knew most about Christ. They were well-acquainted with His mother and the rest of His relatives. They knew His whole pedigree. They could tell at once that Joseph and Mary were of

the tribe of Judah. They probably could tell why they came from Bethlehem and how it was that they once sojourned for awhile in Egypt. The whole story of the wondrous Child was known to them.

Now, surely these people, not needing to be taught the rudiments, not requiring to be instructed in the very elements of the faith, must have been a very hopeful people for Jesus to preach to! But alas, they did not prove to be so! I have many here who are wonderfully like they. You know the whole story of the Savior and have known it ever since your childhood. More than that, the doctrines of the Gospel are theoretically well understood by you. You can discuss Gospel Truths, and you delight to do so, for you take a deep interest in them.

When you read the Scripture it is not to you a dark, mysterious volume, which you cannot at all comprehend—you are able to teach others what are the first principles of the Truth of God. And yet, for all that, how strangely sad it is that, knowing so much, you should practice so little! I am afraid that some of you know the Gospel so well that for this very reason it has lost much of its power with you, for it is as well known as a thrice-told tale.

If you heard it for the first time, its very novelty would strike you, but such interest you cannot now feel. It is said of Whitfield's preaching that one reason of its great success was that he preached the Gospel to people who had never heard it before. The Gospel was, to the masses of England in Whitfield's day, very much a new thing. The Gospel had been either expunged from the Church of England and from Dissenters' pulpits, or where it remained it was with the few within the Church and was unknown to the masses outside.

The simple Gospel of "believe and live," was so great a novelty, that when Whitfield stood up in the fields to preach to his tens of thousands, they heard the Gospel as if it were a new revelation fresh from the skies! But some of you have become Gospel-hardened. It would be impossible to put it into a new shape for your ears. The angles, the corners of the Truth of God, have become worn off to you. Sundays follow Sundays, and you come up to this Tabernacle—you have been here long. You take your seats and go through the service

and it has as much become routine with you as your getting up and dressing yourselves in the morning.

The Lord knows I dread the influence of routine upon myself. I fear lest it should get to be a mere form with me to deal with your souls, and I pray God He may deliver you and me from the deadly effect of religious routine. It were better if some of you would change your place of worship rather than sleep in the old one. Go and hear somebody else if you have heard me long and obtained no blessing. Rather than get in those pews and perish under the Word, lulled by the Gospel which is meant to arouse you, go elsewhere, and let some other voice speak to your ears, and let some other preacher see what God may do by him. O may the Spirit of God but save you, and it shall be equal joy to me whether you be saved under someone else, or under my own word. Yet here is the matter—it is sad, indeed, that men so nearly related to Christianity, who know so much about Christ—should yet reject the Redeemer.

Again, these were people who supposed that they had a claim upon Christ. They did not feel that it would be a great kindness on the part of the Lord Jesus to heal their sick. They no doubt argued, "He is a Nazareth man, and of course He is, in duty, bound to help Nazareth." They considered themselves as being, in a sort, His proprietors who could command Him to help them.

I have sometimes feared that you who are children of godly parents, or seat-holders, or subscribers to various religious objects, in your hearts imagine that if any are to be saved, surely it must be yourselves! Yet your claim has no basis to rest upon! I would to God that you were not only almost, but altogether saved, every one of you. But perhaps the very fact that you think you have a claim upon Divine Grace may be the stone which lies in your path, because you think, "Surely Jesus Christ will cast an eye of favor upon us, even if others perish!"

I tell you He will do as He wills with His own and publicans and harlots will enter into the kingdom of Heaven before some of you if you think that you have any right to mercy! For the mercy of God is God's sovereign gift and He will have you know it to be so. He has said it—said it as with a voice of thunder, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." If you kick against His sovereignty, you shall stumble at a stone upon which you shall be broken.

Oh, but if you can feel you have no claim upon God! If you can put yourself into the position of the publican who dared not lift up so much as his eyes towards Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," you are in a position in which God can bless you consistently with the dignity of His own sovereignty! O take up the position which Grace accepts! Beggars, and such you must be, must not be choosers. He who asks for Grace must not set himself up to dictate to his God. He who would be

saved, though he is unworthy, must come to God upon the footing of a suppliant and humbly plead, that for mercy's sake, the Lord's love would be manifested towards him.

I fear that there may be a spice of this kind of spirit in the minds of some of you, and if so, you are the people who have rejected Christ. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! We call the skies and the round earth to witness! Here are

those that are near to being Christians. They know the Gospel by the letter of it, and they think they have a claim upon the Savior, and yet they remain disobedient to the Divine command, "Believe and live." They turn upon their heels and reject the Savior, and will not come unto Him that they might have life! Hear it, I say, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth!

II. Secondly, we are to explain the reasons WHY THEY THUS REJECT THE MESSIAH. The reasons will be

applicable to some of you, you unconverted people, who are sitting here! Sometimes the Spirit of God comes with a melting power over an audience and makes men feel the Truth which is meant for them. Pray, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that such may be the case now—that our unconverted friends who give us so much concern because of their enmity to Jesus—may be impressed with the remonstrances now addressed to them.

Why did they reject Christ? I think they did so under a very complex feeling not to be accounted for by one circumstance. Several things went to make up their wrath and enmity. The fire of their anger fed upon several kinds of fuel. In the first place, I should not wonder but what the groundwork of their dissatisfaction was laid in the fact that they did not feel themselves to be the persons to whom the Savior claimed to have a commission.

Observe He said, in the 18th verse, that He was, "anointed to preach the Gospel to the poor." Now, the poorest ones in the synagogue may have felt pleased at that. But as it was almost a maxim with the Jewish doctors that it did not matter what became of the poor—for few but the rich could enter Heaven—the very announcement of a Gospel for the poor must have sounded to them awfully democratic and extreme—and must have laid in their minds the foundation of a prejudice. He meant, of course, the "poor in spirit," whether they are poor in pocket or not, for those are the poor whom Jesus comes to bless.

But the use of expressions so contrary to all that they had been accustomed to hear made them bite their lips while they said within themselves, "We are not poor in spirit, but have not we kept the Law?" Did not some of them say, "We have worn our phylacteries and made broad the borders of our garments. We have not eaten except with washed hands. We have strained out all gnats from our wine. We have kept the fasts, and the feasts, and we have made long prayers— why should we feel any poverty of spirit?"

Therefore they felt there was nothing in Christ's mission for them. When He next mentioned the broken-hearted, they were not at all conscious of any need of a broken heart. They felt heart-whole, self-satisfied, perfectly content. What is the use of a preacher? Who

is to preach to the broken-hearted when all his hearers feel that they have no cause to rend their hearts with repentance? Then when He spoke of captives, they claimed to have been born free and not to have been in bondage to any man. They rejected with scorn the very idea that they needed any liberator, for they were as free as free could be.

When Jesus further spoke of the blind—"Blind!" they said, "does He insult us? We are far-seeing men! Let Him go and preach to some of the outcasts who have become blind, but as for us, we can see into the very depths of all mysteries. We need no instruction and opening of eyes from Him." When at last He spoke of those who had been bruised, as though they had been beaten with stripes for their sins—"We have no sins," they said, "for which we should be bruised. We have been honorable, upright people, and never have been chastened by the scourge of the Law. We need no liberty for them that are bruised. What is the acceptable year of the Lord to us, if it is only for bruised captive ones? We are not such."

At a glance you perceive, my Brethren, the reason why in these days Jesus Christ is rejected by so many Church-going and Chapel-going people. Here you see the reason why so many of your respectable attendants at our places of worship reject salvation by Grace—it is because they do not feel that they need a Savior. They think that they are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing! But they know not that they are naked, and poor, and miserable. They claim to be intelligent, thoughtful, and enlightened. They do not know that until a man sees Christ, he walks in darkness and is stone blind, and beholds no light. They are not bruised, they say. Would to God they were! God, perhaps, has left them because it was of no use to bruise them—and why should they be struck any more?

They only revolt more and more because they feel no smarts of conscience, no terrors of God's Law. Therefore Jesus Christ is a root out of a dry ground to them. They despise Him, as the healthy man laughs at the physician, and as the man that is rich cares not for the alms of the benevolent. Ah, but my dear Friends, let me remind you that if you do not feel your need of a Savior, the need exists for all that! You were born in sin and shaped in iniquity, and no baptismal waters can wash away your defilement. Beside this, you have sinned from your youth up in heart, and word, and thought— and you are condemned already because you have not believed on the Son of God!

Although you may not have been openly wicked, yet there is a text which I must bring to your remembrance—"The wicked shall be turned into Hell with all the nations that forget God." That last list includes you, my Hearer—you who forget, and postpone, and trifle—you who wait for "a more convenient season." It includes you who live with the Gospel

before you and yet do not comply with its commands, but say to your sins, "I love you too well to repent of you," and to your self-righteousness, "I am too fond of this foundation to leave it to build upon the foundation which God has laid in the Person of His dear Son."

Ah, my dear Hearers, it is the self-conceit which makes the empty bag think itself full and which makes the hungry man dream that he has feasted and is satisfied. It is self-right-

eousness which damns the souls of thousands! There is nothing so ruinous as this presumptuous self-confidence. I pray the Lord may make you feel yourself to be undone, ruined, lost, cast away, and then there is no fear of your rejecting Christ, for he that is perfectly bankrupt is willing to accept a Savior! He that has nothing of his own falls flat before the Cross and takes gladly the "all things" which are stored up in the Lord Jesus! This is the first and perhaps the greatest reason why men reject the Savior.

But, secondly, I entertain little doubt but what the men of Nazareth were angry with Christ because of His exceedingly high claims. He said, "The Spirit of Jehovah is upon Me." They started at that. Yet they might be willing to admit that He was a Prophet, and so, if He meant it in that sense, they would be patient. But when He said, "The Lord has anointed Me to preach," and so on, claiming to be no other than the promised Messiah, they shook their heads and mur-muringly said, "He claims too much."

When He placed Himself side by side with Elijah and Elisha, and claimed to have the same rights and the same spirit as those famous ones—and by inference compared His hearers to the worshippers of Baal in Elijah's day—then they felt as if He set Himself up too high, and put them down too low. And here, again, I see another master reason why so many of you good people, as you would be thought to be, reject my Lord and Master.

He sets Himself too high. He asks too much of you. He puts you down too low. He tells you, you must be nothing— and He must be everything. He tells you that you must give up that idol god of yours, the world, and the pleasures of it, and that He must be your Master, and not your own wills. He tells you that you must pluck out the right eye of pleasure if it comes in the way of holiness, and rend off the right arm of profit rather than commit sin. He tells you that you must take up your cross and follow Him outside the camp—leaving the world's religion and the world's irreligion.

He tells you you must no longer be conformed to the world, but become, in a sacred sense, a Nonconformist to all its vanities and maxims, customs and sins! He tells you that He must be the Prince Imperial in your souls and that you must be His willing servants and His loving disciples. These are claims too high for human nature to yield to them! And yet, dear Hearer, remember that if you do not yield to them, a much worse thing awaits you!

Kiss the Son, kiss His scepter now, I say! Now, bow down and acknowledge Him, for if not, beware "lest He be angry, and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little." Those who kiss not the scepter of silver shall be broken with the rod of iron! They who will not have Christ to reign over them in love shall have Him to rule over them in terror in the day when He puts on the garments of vengeance and dyes His vesture in the blood of His foes!

O acknowledge Him as He is covered with His own blood lest you have to acknowledge Him when He is covered with yours! Accept Him while you may, for you will not be able to escape from Him when those eyes, which are like eyes of fire, shall flash devouring flame

upon His adversaries! Alas, this is a fruitful source of mischief to the sons of men! They cannot give King Jesus His due, but would gladly thrust the Lord of Glory into a corner. Oh, base hearts to kick against so dear, so great, so good a King!

Thirdly, another reason might be found in the fact that they were not for receiving Christ until He had exhibited some great wonder. They craved for miracles. Their minds were in a sickly state. The Gospel, which they did need, they would not have! The miracles which He did not choose to give, they eagerly demanded. Oh, how many there are nowadays who must see signs and wonders, or else they will not believe! I know you, young woman, you have set this in your heart before you, "I must feel as John Bunyan felt—the same horror of conscience, the same gloom of soul—or else I will never believe in Jesus."

But what if you never should feel it, as probably you never may? Will you go to Hell out of spite with God, because He will not do for you just what He did for another? A young man yonder has said to himself, "If I had a dream, as I hear So-and-So had, or if there should happen to me some very remarkable event in Providence which should just meet my taste! Or if I could feel today some sudden shock of, I know not what, then I would believe." Thus you dream that my Lord and Master is to be dictated to by you! You are beggars at His gate, asking for mercy, and you must draw up rules and regulations as to how He shall give that mercy!

Do you think that He will ever submit to this? My Master is of a generous spirit, but He has a right royal heart and He spurns all dictation and maintains His sovereignty of action. But why, dear Hearer, do you crave for signs and wonders? Is it not enough of a wonder that Jesus bids you trust Him and promises that you shall be saved at once? Is not this enough of a sign that God has proposed so wise a Gospel as that of, "Believe, and live"? Is not this enough—is not the

Gospel its own sign, its own wonder, and its own proof, because he that believes has everlasting life? Is not this a miracle of miracles, that, "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not

perish"?

Surely that precious word, "Whoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely," and that solemn promise, "Him that comes unto Me, I will in nowise cast out," are better than signs and wonders! A truthful Savior ought to be believed. He never did lie. Why will you ask proof of the veracity of One who cannot lie? The devils themselves declared him to be the Son of God—and will you stand out against Him? Sovereign, mighty, Irresistible Grace, come and conquer this wickedness in the hearts of men and make them willing to trust Jesus, whether they see signs and wonders or

not!

Again, and perhaps this time I may hit the head of the nail in some cases, though I suppose not in many in this place—part of the irritation which existed in the minds of the

men of Nazareth was caused by the peculiar doctrine which the Savior preached upon the subject of Election. I question whether that was not at bottom the real sting of the whole matter. He laid it down that God had a right to dispense His favors just as He pleased and that in doing so He often selected the most unlikely objects. For instance, a widow in idolatrous Sidon had her needs supplied in famine, while the widows of Israel were left without meal.

At another time under Elisha, when God would heal a leper, He left the Israelite lepers to die, but a leper who came from the idolatrous land of Assyria, and who had been accustomed to bow in the house of Rimmon received healing! Now they did not like this. And I suppose even in this congregation, though you are pretty well accustomed to strong statements upon the Sovereignty of God, and we are not ashamed to preach Predestination and Election as clearly as we preach any doctrine—yet there are some who are mightily uneasy when the doctrine is preached and feel as if they could almost slay the preacher because the doctrine is so offensive to human nature!

Everywhere you will notice that the church of Rome has not half the hatred to Lutheranism that it has to Calvinism. It is the Doctrine of Grace, which is the soul of Calvinism, that is the poison of Popery! Rome cannot endure the Truth that God will save where He wills—that He has not given salvation into the hands of priests, nor given it to our own merit or our own will to save us. God holds the keys of the treasury of Divine Grace and distributes as He pleases. This is the doctrine which makes men so angry that they know not what to say of it!

But, my dear Hearer, I trust this is not the reason why you refuse to believe in Jesus, for if it is, it is a most foolish reason! For while this is true, there is yet another Truth that, "Whoever believes in Jesus Christ, shall not perish." While it is true that the Lord will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, it is equally true that He wills to have mercy, and has already had mercy on every soul that repents of its sin and puts its trust in Jesus! Why cavil at a Truth of God because you cannot understand it? Why kick against the pricks to your own wounding, when the pricks remain as sharp as ever and will not be moved by all your kicking?

The Lord of Hosts has purposed it to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the excellency of the earth: "It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." The Lord will bring down the high tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree to flourish that no flesh may glory in His Presence, so that the Lord may be exalted. Bow, then, to Sovereign Grace! Should He not be King? Who else should rule but God? And if He is a King, has He not a right to forgive the felon condemned to die and yet give no reason to you? Leave that question, and all others, and come to Jesus, whose open arms invite you!

He says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If you wait till you have solved all difficulties, you will never come at all! If you refuse Christ till you understand all mysteries, you will perish in your sins! Come while the gate is opened and while the lamp holds out to burn! He has said it, "Him that comes unto Me, I will in nowise cast out."

I must still mention another reason for the quarrel of the Nazarenes with our Lord. It was probably because they loved not such plain, personal speaking as the Savior gave them. Some hearers affect great delicacy. You must not call a spade a "spade." It is an "agricultural implement," and only to be spoken of in dainty terms. But our Lord used no fine talk. He was a plain speaking Man, and He spoke to men plainly. He knew that men would go to Hell, let Him be as plain as He might, and therefore He would not let them have the excuse that they could not understand the preacher.

He put the Truth of God so clearly that not only could they understand it, but they could not misunderstand it if they tried. His preaching was most personal. "You will say." He did not speak about Capernaum but all about Nazareth, and this helped, also, to make them angry. Once again He gave a hint that He meant to bless the Gentiles. Elijah had fed and Elisha had healed a Gentile, and this undoubted fact made the Jew set his teeth, for he feared that the monopoly of blessing was to cease, and that gifts of Divine Grace were to be given to others besides the sons of Israel. A Gentile dog

was to be admitted into the family, to be permitted not only to eat the crumbs that fell from the table, but to be changed into a child—the Jews could not bear it.

Now there is a great deal of this monopolizing spirit among self-righteous people. Why I have heard people say— shocked I have been to hear it—"Oh, they are having meetings for getting together these girls off the street. It is no use—you may try, but it is no use trying to reform them. And then here are other people looking after these low characters, going into those nasty back slums. Well, if people get there, they ought to be there! We ought not to lower ourselves to look after such good-for-nothing people. There is the Church—if they do not choose to go—let them stay away."

As to going after the very lowest, some people turn up their noses at the very idea of it. This is just the horrible old Jewish monopolizing of the Gospel—as if these people were not as good as you, for all their sins and for all their poverty. But though their vice may happen to be outward, it is not a whit more detestable than the pride of some people which make a boast of a self-righteousness which does not exist. I do not know which God looks upon with the greater abhorrence—the open sinner or the openly good living person whose inward pride stands out against the Gospel! It matters nothing to the physician whether he sees the eruption outside the skin or knows it to be inside. Perhaps, he thinks, it may be harder to get at the second than at the first.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ will have you to know, however good you are, that you must come to Him just as the vilest of the vile must come. You must come as guilty—you cannot come as righteous. You must come to Jesus to be washed. You must come to Him to be clothed. You think you do not want washing. You fancy you are clothed, and covered, and beautiful to look upon. But oh, the garb of outward respectability, and of outward morality often is nothing but a film to hide an abominable leprosy till God's Grace changes the heart! God requires truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part He will make us to know wisdom.

But this superficial England of ours is perfectly satisfied with outside gentility, and you may be as rotten as you will within the heart. The living God will have no pretence—you must be born again! This doctrine, too, is one which people cannot endure! They will say hard things of the preacher, and for this reason they reject Christ. But in so doing they reject their own mercy! They reject the only hope of Heaven, and they seal their own destruction! I wish the time did not fly quite so rapidly when I have such a subject as this. I seem to have the consciences of some of you here, and I am hammering away as with a big sledge hammer, but I am afraid there is very little effect produced because the iron is cold.

O that the Lord would thrust you into the furnace and make you like melted iron! Then the hammer of the Gospel and the Law together might well beat you into something like an evangelical shape, and you might be saved. God's arm is strong enough! God's fire is fierce enough to melt even the iron of self-righteousness!

III. And now, WHAT CAME OF IT? This came of it. First of all, they thrust the Savior out of the synagogue and then they tried to hurl Him down the brow of the hill. These were His friends—good, respectable people—who would have believed it of them? You saw that goodly company in the synagogue who sang so sweetly, and listened so attentively. Would you have guessed that there was a murderer inside every one of their coats? It only needed the opportunity to bring the murderer out—for there they are—all trying to throw Jesus off the cliff!

We do not know how much devil there is inside any one of us. If we are not renewed and changed by Divine Grace, we are heirs of wrath even as others. The description which is given in Romans, that second chapter, that awful chapter, is a truthful picture of every child of Adam. He may look respectable. He may seem to be a lamb, and to be so quiet that a weaned child might play in the cockatrice's den. But he is a deadly cockatrice for all that.

The snake may sleep and you may play with it, but let it wake and you will see that it is a deadly thing. Sin may lie dormant in the soul, but there may come a time when it will wake up. And there may come a time in England when those good people who hang on to the skirts of Christ, and attend our places of worship may actually develop into persecutors. It was once so in England. The people who used to hear the Gospel at the close of Henry the Eighth's day—the people that were so pleased to hear Hugh Latimer under Edward the

Sixth—were quite as ready to carry firewood under Queen Mary, and to burn the servants of the Lord.

My dear Friends, your opposition to Christ may not take that active form, but unless you are converted you are enemies to Jesus. You deny it? I ask you why, then, do you not believe in Him? Why do you not trust Him? You are not opposed to Him, why do not you yield to Him? As long as you do not trust Him, I can only set you down as His enemy. You give this clearest proof of it—you will not even be saved by Him! If there were a man drowning, and another man put out his hand, and he said, "No, I will not be saved by you, I would sooner be drowned," what a proof that would be of enmity! What proof could be more sure?

That is your case—you refuse to be saved by Christ's Grace. Oh, what an enemy of Christ at the bottom of your heart you must be! But what came of it? Why, though they thus thrust Him out, they could not hurt the Savior. The hurt

was all their own. Christ did not fall from the hill. He escaped by His miraculous power—and the Gospel will not be hurt even though you reject it and do worse than reject it—and set yourself in opposition to it.

Jesus Christ glides through the midst of His enemies uninjured. Through the persecutions of Nero and Diocletian, the true Christ of God went on His way. Through all the burnings of Mary, and the hangings of Elizabeth, right on through the times of Claverhouse and his dragoons, the good old Gospel remained unconquered by its foes! It abides still to this very day the same! It escapes from all the anger of its most virulent foes.

But what became of them? Well, they had rejected Christ, and He left them—left them unhealed because of their unbelief. That will be your case. And now it is 1,860 years ago and the souls of all these men of Nazareth have appeared before the Judgment Seat. And in a few more years, when the great trumpet shall sound, all those men who tried to throw Christ down over the cliff will have to look at Him. And they will see Him seated where they cannot grasp Him, nor abuse Him, nor cast Him down.

What a sight it will be for them! Will they say to one another, "Is not this Joseph's son?" When they see Him sitting on the Throne of His glory, and all His holy angels with Him, will they say, "His mother, is she not with us, and His brothers and his sisters?" Will they, then, say to Him, "Physician, heal Yourself"? Oh, what a change will come over those bronze brows! How for every sneer there will be a blush, and for each word of anger there will be cries, and weeping, and wailings, and gnashing of teeth!

My Hearers, the same thing will happen to you! Within a few more years you and I will have mixed our bones with mother earth. And then after that shall come a general resurrection. We shall live and stand in the latter days upon the earth and Christ will come in the clouds of Heaven. And you who heard the Gospel and despised Him, what will you say? Have your apology ready, for you will soon be called upon to say why judgment should not

be pronounced upon you. You cannot say you did not know the Gospel or that you were not warned of the result of rejecting it! You have known. What more could you have known? But your heart would not receive what you knew.

When the Lord begins to say, "Depart, you cursed," what claim will you have not to be numbered with that accursed company? It will be in vain to say, "We have eaten and drunk in Your Presence, and You have taught in our streets," for that will be an aggravation that the kingdom of Heaven came so near unto you and yet you received it not! And when the thunderbolts are launched and He who was once the Lamb so full of mercy shall shine forth as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, full of majesty—that thunderbolt shall be winged with extra force and speed with this tremendous fact—that you rejected Christ, that you heard Him but turned a deaf ear to Him—that you neglected the great salvation, and did despite to the Spirit of Grace!

As I cannot even hope to find words that can have the force of God's own language, I shall close this sermon by reading you these few words which I beg you to lay to your heart. They are in the first chapter of Proverbs, at the 24th verse: "Because I have called, and you refused, I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded. But you have set at nothing all My counsel, and would have none of My reproof, I, also, will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear comes; when your fear comes as desolation, and your destruction comes as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer. They shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of My counsel: they despised all My reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

God save you from that curse.